4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
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627 613 152 754 182 wife, his matrilineal juniors were believed to be especially likely to hire sorcerers to harm her. For they would fear that their *kāranavan* might secretly convey to his wife gifts and cash which belonged to his *taravād*. Yet without their *kāranavan's* support they would be unable to enter an open group conflict with the *taravād* of his wife. The belief that affines might practice sorcery, and the existence of ritual remedies against such attacks, therefore provided for the expression of projected aggression against persons of other lineages within the caste. I do not know whether Nāyars did, in fact, hire sorcerers to harm their affines, or merely suspected this of others, but it seems very probable that they did. If so, sorcery also provided a covert mode for the expression of direct aggression outside the lineage too. It must be noticed that although, in the case cited, these hostilities arose as much in the conflict of interests between the *kāranavan* and his matrilineal kin as between the *kāranavan's* wife and her husband's *taravād*, their institutionalized expression was not allowed to disrupt the *taravād*. For the *kāranavan's* matrilineal kin could not practice, and could not be suspected of practicing, sorcery against the *kāranavan* himself. Instead, members of the *kāranavan's* lineage were believed to move (and probably did move) against his wife's lineage as a group, thus endangering the solidarity of the marriage but indirectly promoting unity within each lineage.

564 578 152 182 754 Turning to the relations between castes, it is obvious that as endogamous groups of different rank, occupation and wealth, castes were in many contexts outgroups to each other whose interests were opposed. As landlords and noncultivating tenants, the Brahmans and Nāyars wished to exploit the lower castes for their labor; conversely, the lower castes wished to obtain as much compensation as possible from the higher castes. In these circumstances there was great realistic potential for hostility between castes, quite apart from the fact that the internal unity of each caste probably required the displacement of considerable additional aggression toward outgroups in other castes. Organized physical aggression between castes was, however, not feasible. For castes were economically and politically interdependent and linked by hereditary, interhousehold service ties. The lower castes could not rise up against the higher castes who employed them and held political power, and the higher castes could not wantonly harrass the lower castes on whom they depended for services. Instead, it was in the relations between castes that the institutions of witchcraft and sorcery were most prominent. The general tendency was for the Nāyars to accuse the lower castes of these evils. This is understandable, for the Nāyars with their wealth and authority had particular reason to suspect the lower castes of envy and hidden hatred. This generalized projection of aggression toward the lower castes served to enhance the internal unity of the Nāyar caste. At the same time, the open expression of aggression against particular low caste persons was institutionally controlled. For the astrologer did not customarily name his client's enemy, and even if the Nāyar had his own suspicions, open accusations of witchcraft and sorcery were not permitted.

769 564 787 152 182 766 The lower castes were considered peculiarly appropriate propitiants for alien ghosts, and only low caste people could voluntarily undergo possession by them. This suggests that the Nāyar fear of direct attack from an alien ghost, like the fear of witchcraft and sorcery, expressed in a disguised manner the Nāyars' projected aggression against the lower castes. The association between lower castes and alien ghosts was, for Nāyars, indeed appropriate, for both were ritually polluting. Among Nāyars, the corpses of persons who die violently or from epidemic are unusually polluting and

their ghosts unusually dangerous. Instead of being burned by their matrilineal kin, the corpses of these persons are buried hastily by men of the washermen's caste—a caste particularly associated with demon propitiation and voluntary ghost possession. The spirits of these victims become alien ghosts. In their anger they may possess and cause injury to persons of any caste in their community. But only the lower castes can induce shamanistic possession by them, and it is chiefly (some say only) the lower castes who can control them to work good or ill. Appropriately, Nāyars believe that low caste witches perform additional rites connected with highly polluting objects and places in order to enhance their evil power. Witches, for example, are believed to procure a magical substance by abstracting the foetus from the body of a pregnant woman and boiling it in a cremation ground, to the accompaniment of spells to a favorite ghost or patron demon.

There is, however, a qualitative difference between the Nāyar fear of direct attack from an alien ghost and the fear of witchcraft or sorcery. An element of morality enters into the former fear, even though alien ghosts are more wanton and capricious than lineage ghosts. Although they are malevolent and hateful, alien ghosts must, like lineage ghosts, be respected and propitiated, and there is a feeling that they have the right to be as they are. When they are associated with regular cults of the *taravād* and the village, moreover, alien ghosts can also afford some vague measure of protection from misfortune to those Nāyars who conscientiously arrange for their propitiation. It follows, therefore, that the alien ghost attached to a *taravād* or a village temple acts in some measure as a kind of conscience for the Nāyar in his relations with low caste people. For a Nāyar *taravād* which arranges grand festivals for its alien ghosts, lavishing gifts on the low caste officiants who propitiate them and represent them as oracles, is also likely to be a *taravād* which has good relations with its lower caste servants in all contexts of living. In the case of the Nāyar relation to alien ghosts of his *taravād* and his village, as in the case of his relation to lineage ghosts, the concept of reprojection of the superego may therefore be appropriate, as well as that of the simple projection of aggressive id impulses. For while there seems no doubt that the Nāyar projects on to alien ghosts some of the aggression which he has toward the lower castes, just as he projects onto lineage ghosts some of the aggression he feels toward matrilineal elders, these ghosts act also as stern monitors of his conduct in relationships, respectively, with the lower castes and with matrilineal kin.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery. It is true that a Nāyar who has recently wronged an untouchable or an affine may be one most likely to suspect untouchables or affines of attacks by sorcery. But he does not—at least openly—phrase the attack in terms of justifiable retaliation for his own wrongdoing. Instead, he speaks of some anonymous affine or low caste person who, out of his own envy and wickedness, has used his evil power over a patron ghost in order to harm an innocent person. Nor does the Nāyar respond to the attacks of witches and sorcerers by humble propitiation of the possessing demon. Instead he engages a low caste practitioner of his own to exorcise the demon with the help of a superior ghostly power. Thus, while both the belief in sorcery and the public cults of alien ghosts probably reveal, indirectly, the projection of Nāyar aggression against out-groups, they operate in different social contexts. Witchcraft and sorcery are regarded, by Nāyars who are the recipients of these attacks, as the evil work of envious persons against those more successful than themselves. They are seen as covert substitutes for

5:Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
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825
171 deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake shrines, particularly in pious households.

753 All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes.
825 Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison,
171 are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for
782 snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship
778 at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity. Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person [766] dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

771 Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes
825 unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a
778 Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him
796 and left them in their present abode. He however promised to
[173] return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore, a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *kavu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

778 The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

the couch on which the Nâyar has his oil bath. The surface of it is sloping, the higher end being where the head is laid, and it is scooped out so as to suit the curvatures of the body lying flat.* Lying on her back, her head is raised and the thighs are stretched wide apart. Very often she holds in each hand a rope suspended from the ceiling, by way of support. The child is received by a woman of the barber caste."

DEATH AND SUCCEEDING CEREMONIES.

When the dying person is about to embark for that bourne from which no traveller returns, when the breath is about to leave his body, the members of the household, and all friends who may be present, one by one pour a little water, a few drops from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the tulsi plant, into his mouth, holding in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring; the idea being that the water should touch gold ere it enters the mouth of the person who is dying. If the Taravâd is rich enough to afford it, a small gold coin, (a Râsi fanam, if one can be procured †) is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed. As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed, and carried to the vatakkini (a room in the northern end of the house) where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor; and while it is in this room, whether by day or by night, a lamp is kept burning, and one member of the Taravâd holds the head in his lap and another the feet in the same way; and here the neighbours come to take a farewell look at the dead.

As the Malayâlis believe that disposal of a corpse by cremation or burial as soon as possible after death is conducive to the happiness of the spirit of the departed, no time is lost in setting about the funeral. The bodies of senior members of a Taravâd, male or female, are burned; those of children under two are buried; so too are the bodies of all persons who have died of cholera or small-pox.‡ When preparations for the funeral have been made, the corpse is removed to the natumuttam or central yard of the house if there is one (there always is

* Every Nâyar, and for the matter of that, every Malayali, has an oil bath about once a week or as often as he can afford. The person is well shampooed with gingelly oil.

† These are now rare.

‡ It is the same amongst the Khonds of Ganjam.

All this over

the only thing to be done for the deceased is the annual shraddham, or yearly funeral commemorative rite. Rice balls (pindams) are made and given to crows. Clapping of hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and, should they come at once and eat it, it is obvious that the spirit of the deceased is pleased with the offering, and is not likely to be troublesome. But, on the other hand, should they not come and eat, it is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the Taravâd had better look out.

The ceremonial connected with the funeral rites which have been described, illustrates the immense difference which exists, as it does in the case of all peoples more or less cultured, between the primitive belief of the race, and the higher, the more abstract, religion which they believe they believe. With races, as with children, the earliest associations are the strongest, and persist through the life of the race as through the life of the individual. The higher power of reasoning which comes with higher development does not disperse them altogether. The people who practise these rites are good Hindus, and, according to the theory of their Hindu religion, the spirit which is emancipated from the body at death at once inhabits another body, for suffering or for enjoyment measured by the deserts of the bodily existence which has just ceased. This is the higher religion. And yet they admit that the spirit is connected with the shadow, not with the breath;—and feel in their hearts that it still lingers in the house and absorbs the essence of the ingredients of the food offered to it; that it must be propitiated or it will cause harm to the living. This is the primitive religion. It is supposed that the spirits of those whose ashes are deposited at Benares or other place of sanctity, and for whose sake alms are given to Brâhmans, remain at those holy spots, and become more and more god-like. This is a mixture of both. We are here concerned with facts rather than theories and, as much has been said already of this side of the subject of comparative religions, we may proceed with our facts. The spirits of those who have committed suicide or met death by any violent means are always particularly vicious and troublesome to the Taravâd, their spirit possessing and rendering miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless pacified they will ruin the Taravâd, so Brâhman priests are called in and appease them by means of Tilahômam, a rite in which sacrifical fire is raised, and ghee, gingelly and other things are offered through it.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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this ceremony. Thus having purged their bodies of all worldliness they are taken into the ceremony and are seated as described before. Now by means of the *mantrams* and poojah the serpent gods are propitiated and in consequence they manifest themselves in the bodies of these female representatives of theirs. The entrance of the gods into their bodies is characterised by a fearful concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a ceaseless, shaking, particularly the upper parts. A few minutes afterwards, they begin to speak one by one and their speeches are regarded as expressions of the god's will. Sometimes the gods appear in the bodies of all these females and sometimes only in those of a select few or none at all. The refusal of the gods to enter into such persons is symbolical of some want of cleanliness and purity in them; which contingency is looked upon as a source of anxiety to the individual. It may also suggest the displeasure of these gods towards the family in respect of which the ceremony is performed. In either case, such refusal on the part of the gods is an index of their ill-will or dissatisfaction. In cases where the gods refuse to appear in any one of those seated for the purpose, the ceremony is prolonged until the gods are so properly propitiated as to constrain them to manifest themselves. Then after the lapse of the number of days fixed for the ceremony and after the will of the serpent gods is duly expressed the ceremonies close.

"One other small item of offering to these gods consists in certain ballads sung by the Pulluvar females going about from house to house at stated seasons of the year. They take a pretty large pitcher, close its opening by means of a small circular piece of thin leather which is fastened on to the vessel by means of strings strongly tied round its neck. Another string is adjusted to the leather cover which when played on by means of the fingers, produces a hoarse note which is said to please the god's ears, pacify their anger and lull them into sleep. This vessel is carried from house to house in the day time by these Pulluvar females; and placing the vessel in a particular position on the ground, and sitting in a particular fashion in relation to the vessel, they play on the string which then produces a very pleasing musical note. Then they sing ballads to the accompaniment of these notes. After continuing this for sometime they stop, and getting their customary dues from the family, go their own way. It is believed that these notes and the ballads are peculiarly pleasing to the serpent gods, who bless those for whose sakes the music has been rendered. In consequence of the halo of sanctity that has been popularly thrown round the serpent it is considered a sin of a most heinous nature to kill one of these deified reptiles. The killing of a cobra is regarded with the utmost concern amongst us. In such case the carcase is taken and duly burned with all

776 the necessary solemn ceremonials. Sandalwood is the fuel used
766 sometimes. A small pit is dug which is covered with sandalwood
825 pieces and they are set fire to. When the flame burns intensely the body is quietly placed in it, and reduced to ashes together with, in some cases, incense and myrrh. This is believed to mitigate the dangers consequent on the death of the serpent.

776 "The popular conception of the family cobra is that it is a
825 tiny little thing with a full developed hood, and fangs, and possessing a golden tinge; which shine brilliantly in the rays of the sun. At the sight of human beings it gets away to its holy shrine exhibiting a reeling motion on its way thither. It never gets far away from its abode of which it is the perennial guardian.

564 "One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates
776 to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their
825 powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.

[755] "Cases of cobra-poison are generally taken to this Brahman family and the headman sometimes summons before him the identical animal which caused injury and it is said successfully effects a cure as if by some mystic and magic influence.

825 "The serpent also plays a conspicuous part in contracts
425 between citizens. The family serpent is in old deeds the subject-matter of sale. The sale of a house compound extends
776 also to the family serpent. The stipulation in these documents invariably is that the family serpents are sold along with the properties; and even in cases of division of family property amongst its several branches of members, the family-serpent is included in the division. Such is the sacred prominence
[753] which has been given to the serpent amongst us. Their anger is said to manifest itself in some member of the family being
[982] struck down with leprosy or some other loathsome disease; while by their propitiation they can be converted into the guardian angels of our households, powerful enough to preserve the prosperity of the inmates as well as to vouchsafe their complete immunity from the attacks of virulent diseases and sometimes even from death."

CUSTOMS, GAMES, FESTIVALS, ETC.

Hamilton in his "New Account of the East Indies" published in 1744, writes:—

"It was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin, then the local potentate) to reign but twelve years and no longer. If he died before his term was expired it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast, he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is proclaimed throughout his dominion, at the end of twelve years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain, and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through 30, or 40,000 of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds to him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened and the tent pitched near Ponnany (Ponani) a seaport of his about 16 leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and after they had killed and wounded many were themselves killed. One of the *Desperadoes* had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age, that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent and made a stroke at his majesty's head and had certainly dispatched him, if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head, had not marred the blow; but before he could make another, he was killed by the guards; and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet. I chanced to come that time along the coast and heard the guns for two or three days and nights successively."

Here must be made an excerpt from the "Malabar Manual" as its author Mr. Logan, while Collector (chief administrative officer) of Malabar, made excellent use of his opportunities to delve into the ancient archives of the district.

"The *Kêrala Mâhâtmya* so far corroborates Hamilton's story, that it declares the king used to be deposed at this festival, but there is no mention of self-immolation. although it is quite possible the deposed kings may have

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

themselves by bathing in the temple tank, come to the *Darśana* (the aspect towards which the face of the image looks). There the priest brings the offering and the male member from either the father's family or the mother's own family takes a little of it on his pointing finger and gives it to the child. The child is supposed to inherit the qualities of the person who gives it the sacred rice, an idea allied to the superstition concerning godfather and godchild. There is, of course, a feast on the day at the child's house.

"Chaque société générale," says M. Van Gennep, "peut être considéré comme une sorte de maison devisée en chambres et en couloirs. . . . Chez les demi-civilisés ces compartiments sonts soigneusement isolés les unes des autres et pour passer de l'un à l'autre des formalités et des cérémonies sont nécessaires." This idea that in semi-civilised societies stages of life are marked out with great precision so that the passage from one to another necessitates ceremonies or "rites de passage" is applicable only in a very limited sense in the case of the Nāyars. Among them such ceremonies are few and very far between. The male children, after the *Churu Koda*, or the rice-giving ceremony just now described, have only one other ceremony to perform which is called *Sasty-Purty*, or the fullness of sixty years. Between his sixth month and his sixtieth year a male member of the Nāyar Society has no *rites de passage* to pass through. The *Sasty-Purty*, which takes place on his sixtieth birthday, is a sort of jubilee, after which respectable people are supposed to retire from worldly life. It is indeed a *rite de passage*.

Women have naturally more ceremonies than men. Apart from the *Talikettu* (described in the last chapter) a Nāyar woman has to pass through the ceremonies of *Terundu Kuli* (bathing after the first menses) and *Pulicudi* described above. After she has become a mother a woman can be said to be free from all ceremonies till her sixtieth year, when, after a *Sasty-Purty*, she also retires from active life.

The Nāyar funeral ceremonies are of a very complex nature. They show a great deal of Hindu ideas about soul and re-birth mixed with purely Nāyar beliefs about *Pretams*, ghosts, etc., etc. It is important, in this connection, to notice at the very start that the Nāyars make a clear distinction between the ceremonies performed at the death of the eldest member of the family and those at the death of others. The following is the procedure generally adopted at the death of a Nāyar. As soon as a person dies he is bathed and clad in white, and laid on a bed made of long plantain leaves. If it is the eldest male or female member of the family that is dead, then all their relations on the matrilineal side present new cotton cloths, with which the corpse is covered and tied before it is taken to be burnt. Only the eldest members are burnt; others are buried. Apart from the greater importance attached to the death of the eldest members, the ordinary funeral rites are in essentials the same.

The presence of the *Mārāns* (a particular caste among the Nāyars who perform the lesser priestly functions) is absolutely necessary on the occasion. He is sent for as

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[564] soon as death has taken place in a house, and on his arrival undertakes the general management of the ceremonies.

After the corpse is tied and laid on the plantain leaves, a ceremony called *Para Nirathuka* takes place. (*Para* is a measure of paddy, and *Nirathuka* means to place in line.) A coconut-oil lamp is lit and placed at the head of the corpse and immediately in front of it are placed three *paras* of rice. The significance of this ceremony is unknown to me.

●766 *Ceremonies of Cremation.*—If the deceased is the eldest of a family the body is now cremated. A pyre is made of mango wood, and the corpse is placed with its head towards the south (the god of death, according to the Hindu mythology, resides in the south), and then covered with fuel. The nephew or younger brother lights the fire. Then all the members of the family and all others who have been polluted by contact with them go and bathe in the tank. During the process of burning there is a process called *Kumba pradikshanam*—which is manifestly an Aryan custom (*Kumbham* and *Pradikshanam* are two Sanskrit words: the first means a pot, and the second means to walk round). The ceremony, as its name implies, consists of walking round the pyre with a pitcher, the bottom of which is pierced. One of the family fills this pitcher with water and carries it three times round the burning corpse, dashing it on the ground at the end.

765 Two or three members of the family continue to perform funeral rites for the next fourteen days. As I have not taken part in it I do not possess first-hand knowledge.

765 For all the fourteen days, all the members of the family are under pollution.
783 The pollution, in the case of death, is very strong. All the members of the family are
[564] untouchable, and any Nāyar who touches them must purify himself by a bath. On the fourteenth day is the purificatory ceremony. The *Mārān* comes in the morning and gives everyone some oil. After smearing the body with these everyone goes and bathes, and comes back clad in white. The *Mārān* then sprinkles holy water, and a Brahmin priest purifies the house. There is generally a big feast for two days.

765 The feast on the fifteenth day is accompanied by some sports. All the men
526 of the neighbouring villages come for it, and there is great *tamasha*. How far this could be identified with funeral sports elsewhere it is hard to say.

785 After these feastings one of the family undertakes a *Diksha* (which means a
782 vow) for forty-one[1] days or a whole year. During this time, the man who undertakes
765 the *Diksha* lives apart with a Brahmin. He is not allowed to talk to or see a woman. He must not cut his hair or his nails. He must bathe twice a day in the river, or in
[529] the tank, and lead a pure and pious life. If it is only for forty-one days, there is not much feasting at the end of it. If it goes on for a full year, there is a huge celebration,

[1] All ordinary vows are taken for forty-one days. If you want to placate a deity you pray to him for forty-one days. If you want to make a big sacrifice it extends to forty-one days, etc.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala pûja* from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of worshippers.[1]

Demon worship.

The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a very great extent the outcome of a belief in, and a constant fear of, the influence of demons and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers, from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a distinction between *Bhûtas* on the one hand, and *Prêtas* and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

1. Vide Religion of the Ishuvens, Vol. I, page 313.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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prevailed on him to cease his work. The head was therefore transformed into a cocoanut which was henceforth to be one of the most useful of all trees in the vegetable kingdom, and was dedicated to Ganésa, the patron of science and learning.

Funeral customs.

The Nayars generally burn their dead bodies, while those of children under two or three years of age as well as those of persons who have died of small-pox or cholera are buried. When a Nayar is at the point of death, the members of the house-hold and friends who may be present, one by one, pour into his mouth a few drops of Ganges or other holy water or *kanji* water, from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the *tulsi* plant. While doing this, they hold in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring and the water is supposed to touch the gold, before it enters the mouth of the dying person. Sometimes, a *fanam* or gold piece is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed.

As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed and carried to the *vadakkini*, a room at the northern end of the house, where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor, and while it is there, a lamp is kept burning both day and night. One member of the family holds the head in his lap, while another the feet in the same way, and here it is that the neighbours come to have a last look at the dead. All the while, the names of gods or sacred texts are loudly recited in the hope that the soul may quit the world with recollections of God which would serve as a passport to Heaven. Immediately death occurs, the members of the house and the relatives assembled there burst out into loud lamentations, announcing the sad event to the caste-men of the village who attend at once. When preparations for the funeral have been made, the dead body is carried to the *nadu-mittam* or central yard of the house, or if there is no central yard, to the front yard where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is then washed, anointed and neatly clothed, and the usual marks of sandal-wood paste and ashes, as in life, are made. The senior member of the deceased's family along with others including the sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and all the relatives, place new cotton cloths over the dead, and these are used for tying up the corpse before being taken to the cremation ground. Before removal, another ceremony called *Para Nirakkuka* (filling up *para*, a measure thrice the size of a gallon)

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765
613 and gingelly seeds every morning after his bath to the departed
[782] spirit, and he must abstain from women, meat, alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel and tobacco. When the *Deeksha* is observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described above until the last day of *Deeksha*, the forty-first or the 365th day after death. When *Deeksha* is observed for a year, the ceremony called *bali* is performed every day. The last day of *Deeksha* is one of festivity, and after *bali*, the man under *Deeksha*
769 is shaved. Then at the end of every year, the annual *Sradha*
[782] or the commemorative rite is performed for the deceased.
[825] Rice ball offerings are made and given to the crows, when clapping of hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and should they come and eat it, it is considered that the spirit of the deceased is pleased with the
[613] offering and is not likely to be troublesome. But, on the other hand, should they not come and eat it, it is evident that the spirit is displeased and the *tarawád* had better be on the look
● 766 out. In the case of those who have committed suicide or met
775 death by violent means, the spirits are always particularly
613 vicious and troublesome to the *tarawád*, invariably rendering
782 miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless the spirits are pacified, they will ruin the family, so a Brahman priest is invited to satisfy them by means of *Tilahómam*, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and ghee and gingelly seeds are among the offerings.

thorns. The wires or thorns are left in the ears. In the case of girls, the hole is subsequently gradually distended by the insertion of nine different kinds of thorns or plugs in succession, the last of which is a bamboo plug, till it is large enough to admit the characteristic Malayāli ear ornament, the boss-shaped toda."

Of the death ceremonies among the Nāyars of Malabar, the following detailed account is given by Mr. Fawcett. "When the dying person is about to embark for that bourne from which no traveller returns, and the breath is about to leave his body, the members of the household, and all friends who may be present, one by one, pour a little water, a few drops from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), into his mouth, holding in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring, the idea being that the person should touch gold ere it enters the mouth of the person who is dying. If the taravād is rich enough to afford it, a small gold coin (a rāsi fanam, if one can be procured) is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed. As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed and carried to the vatakkini (a room in the northern end of the house), where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor; and, while it is in the room, whether by day or night, a lamp is kept burning, and one member of the taravād holds the head in his lap, and another the feet in the same way; and here the neighbours come to take a farewell look at the dead. As the Malayālis believe that disposal of a corpse by cremation or burial as soon as possible after death is conducive to the happiness of the spirit of the departed, no time is lost in setting about the funeral. The bodies of senior members of the taravād, male or female, are burned, those of children under two are buried; so too are the bodies of all

persons who have died of cholera or small-pox. When preparations for the funeral have been made, the corpse is removed to the natumuttam or central yard of the house, if there is one (there always is in the larger houses); and, if there is not, is taken to the front yard, where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is washed and anointed, the usual marks are made with sandal paste and ashes as in life, and it is neatly clothed. There is then done what is called the potavekkuka ceremony, or placing new cotton cloths (kōti mundu) over the corpse by the senior member of the deceased's taravād followed by all the other members, and also the sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, and all relatives. These cloths are used for tying up the corpse, when being taken to the place of burial or cremation. In some parts of Malabar, the corpse is carried on a bier made of fresh bamboos, tied up in these cloths, while in others it is carried, well covered in the cloths, by hand. In either case it is carried by the relatives. Before the corpse is removed, there is done another ceremony called pāra-virakkuka, or filling up pāras. (A pāra is a measure nearly as big as a gallon.) All adult male members of the taravād take part in it under the direction of a man of the Attikkurissi clan who occupies the position of director of the ceremonies during the next fifteen days, receiving as his perquisites all the rice and other offerings made to the deceased's spirit. It consists in filling up three pāra measures with paddy (unhusked rice), and one edangāli ($\frac{1}{16}$ of a pāra) with raw rice. These offerings of paddy and rice are placed very near the corpse, together with a burning lamp of the kind commonly used in Malabar, called nela vilaku. If the taravād is rich enough to afford one, a silk cloth is placed over the corpse before its removal for cremation.

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no need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. 764 613 This is called ashtagaya srâdh. It puts an end to the [769] need for all earthly ceremonial. It is believed that the [775] collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead [787] gives peace to his spirit, and, what is more important, the pacified spirit will not thereafter injure the living members of the taravâd, cause miscarriage to the women, possess the men (as with an evil spirit), and so on. On 764 the fifteenth day after death is the purificatory ceremony. 613 Until this has been done, any one touched by any 783 member of the taravâd should bathe before he enters his house, or partakes of any food. A man of the [564] Athikurisi clan officiates. He sprinkles milk oil, in which some gingelly seeds have been put, over the persons of those under pollution. This sprinkling, and the bath which follows it, remove the death pollution. The purifier receives a fixed remuneration for his offices [465] on this occasion, as well as when there is a birth in the taravâd. In the case of death of a senior member of a 766 taravâd, well-to-do and recognised as of some importance, 613 there is the feast called pinda atiyantaram on the 765 sixteenth day after death, given to the neighbours and 302 friends. With the observance of this feast of pindams there is involved the dîksha, or leaving the entire body unshaved for forty-one days, or for a year. There is no variable limit between forty-one days or a year. The [184] forty-one-day period is the rule in North Malabar. I have seen many who were under the dîksha for a year. He who lets his hair grow may be a son or nephew of the deceased. One member only of the taravâd bears 766 the mark of mourning by his growth of hair. He who 765 is under the dîksha offers half-boiled rice and gingelly 613 seeds to the spirits of the deceased every morning after [782] his bath, and he is under restriction from women, from [784] [834]

766 613 765 alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel, also from tobacco. When the dīksha is observed, the ashes of the [784] dead are not deposited as described already (in the sun-[834] dried vessel) until its last day—the forty-first or a year after death. When it is carried on for a year, there is observed every month a ceremony called bali. It is noteworthy that, in this monthly ceremony and for the conclusion of the dīksha, it is not the thirtieth or three hundred and sixty-fifth day which marks the date for the ceremonies, but it is the day (of the month) of the star which was presiding when the deceased met his death: the returning day on which the star presides.* For the [514] bali, a man of the Elayatu caste officiates. The Elayatus [793] are priests for the Nāyars. They wear the Brāhmin's thread, but they are not Brāhmins. They are not permitted to study the Vēdas, but to the Nāyars they [782] stand in the place of the ordinary purōhit. The officiating Elayatu prepares the rice for the bali, when to the deceased, represented by karuka grass, are offered boiled rice, curds, gingelly seeds, and some other [465] things. The Elayatu should be paid a rupee for his services, which are considered necessary even when the man under dīksha is himself familiar with the [302] required ceremonial. The last day of the dīksha is one of festivity. After the bali, the man under dīksha is shaved. All this over, the only thing to be done for the deceased is the annual srādh or yearly funeral commemorative rite. [825] Rice-balls are made, and given to crows. Clapping of [775] hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and, should they not come at once and eat, it is evident that the spirit is displeased, and the taravād had better look out. The spirits of those who

[805] * All caste Hindus who perform the srādh ceremonies calculate the day of death, not by the day of the month, but by the thithis (day after full or new moon).

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The spirits of those who
have committed suicide, or met death by any violent means, are always particularly vicious and troublesome to the taravād, their spirits possessing and rendering miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless they are pacified, they will ruin the taravād, so Brāhman priests are called in, and appease them by means of tilahōmam, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and ghī, gingelly, and other things are offered through it."

"There are," Mr. Fawcett writes, "many interesting features in the death ceremonies as performed by the Kiriattil class. Those who carry the corpse to the pyre are dressed as women, their cloths being wet, and each carries a knife on his person. Two junior male members of the taravād thrust pieces of mango wood into the southern end of the burning pyre, and, when they are lighted, throw them over their shoulders to the southwards without looking round. Close to the northern end of the pyre, two small sticks are fixed in the ground, and tied together with a cloth, over which water is poured thrice. All members of the taravād prostrate to the ground before the pyre. They follow the enangu carrying the pot of water round the pyre, and go home without looking round. They pass to the northern side of the house under an arch made by two men standing east and west, holding at arms length, and touching at the points, the spade that was used to dig the pit under the pyre, and the axe with which the wood for the pyre was cut or felled. After this is done the kodali ceremony, using the spade, axe, and big knife. These are placed on the leaves where the corpse had lain. Then follows circumambulation and prostration by all, and the leaves are committed to the burning pyre."

In connection with the death ceremonies, it is noted in the Cochin Census Report, 1901, that "the last

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mouth. With the breaking of a cocoanut, and the offering of some powdered rice, betel leaf, areca nut, etc., the body is taken to the pyre. The members junior to the deceased go round the pyre three, five, or seven times, throw paddy and rice over the dead body, put scantlings of sandal wood, prostrate at the feet of the corpse, and then set fire to the pyre. When the body is almost wholly consumed, one of the male members carries a pot of water, and, after making three rounds, the pot is broken and thrown into the pyre. The death of an elderly male member of a family is marked by udakakriya and sanchayanam, and the daily bali performed at the bali kutti (altar) planted in front of the house, or in the courtyard in the centre of the house, where there is one. The Ashtikurissi Nāyar officiates as priest at all such obsequies. On the morning of the fifteenth day, the members of the family wear cloths washed by a Vēlan, and assemble together for purification by the Nāyar priest, both before and after bathing, who throws on them paddy and rice, and sprinkles the holy mixture. The Elayad or family purōhit then performs another punnayaham or purification, and on the sixteenth day he takes the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth day, and the morning of the sixteenth day, the purōhits and villagers are sumptuously feasted, and presents of cloths and money are made to the Elayads. In the Chittūr tāluk, the Tamil Brāhman sometimes performs priestly functions in place of the Elayad. Dīksha is performed for forty-one days, or for a whole year, for the benefit of the departed soul. This last ceremony is invariably performed on the death of the mother, maternal uncle, and elder brother."

In connection with the habitations of the Nāyars, Mr. Fawcett writes as follows. "A house may face east or

bangle there by a messenger. An Akattu Charna Nāyar wore an amulet to keep off the spirit of a Brāhman who died by drowning. Another had a silver ring, on which a piece of a bristle from an elephant's tail was arranged."

Tattooing is said by Mr. Subramani Aiyar not to be favoured by North Travancore Nāyars, and to be only practiced by Nāyar women living to the south of Quilon. Certain accounts trace it to the invasion of Travancore by a Moghul Sirdar in 1680 A.D. In modern times it has become rare. The operation is performed by women of the Odda or Kurava caste before a girl reaches the twelfth year.

Concerning the religious worship of the Nāyars, Mr. Subramani Aiyar writes that "Buchanan notes that the proper deity of the Nāyars is Vishnu, though they wear the mark of Siva on their foreheads. By this is merely meant that they pay equal reverence to both Siva and Vishnu, being Smartas converted to the tenets of Saṅkaracharya. Besides worshipping the higher Hindu deities, the Nāyars also manifest their adoration for several minor ones, such as Mātan, Utayam, Yakshi, Chattan, Chantakarnan, Murti, Maruta, and Arukula. Most of these have granite representations, or at least such emblems as a sword or a cane, and are provided with a local habitation. Besides these, persons who have met with accidental death, and girls who have died before their tāli-tying ceremony, are specially worshipped under the designations of Kazhichchavu and Kannichchavu. Magicians are held in some fear, and talismanic amulets are attached to the waist by members of both sexes. Kuttichattan, the mischievous imp of Malabar, is supposed to cause much misery. Various spirits are worshipped on the Tiruvonam day in the month of Avani (August-September), on the Uchcharam or 28th